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FM AMEMBASSY BANJUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0210  
INFO AMEMBASSY CONAKRY  
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT  
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE  
AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USDAO DAKAR SG  
AMEMBASSY DAKAR  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO  
AMEMBASSY BISSAU  
DIA WASHDC//DH06//  
AMEMBASSY PRAIA

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 03 BANJUL 002791

DEPT FOR AF/W  
LONDON FOR MCKINLEY  
PARIS FOR PERLOW

E.0.12356N DECL:OADR  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [GA](#)  
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: JAMMEH CLAIMS AN OPEN MANDATE

11. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

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SUMMARY  
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12. LT JAMMEH, THE PRC, AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT MET THE PEOPLE OF BANJUL AT A MASS RALLY JULY 13, 1994. LT JAMMEH AND OTHER SPEAKERS FOCUSED ON THE NEED FOR CHANGE, THE IMPORTANCE OF ROOTING OUT CORRUPTION, AND THE NEED FOR NATIONAL UNITY. LT JAMMEH PROMISED THAT THE PRC WOULD REMAIN IN POWER AS LONG AS THE PEOPLE OF THE GAMBIA WISHED. A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY WAS NOT DISCUSSED. LT JAMMEH'S REMARKS INDICATE A LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR WESTERN DEMOCRACY AND AN IMMEDIATE CONCERN FOR ELIMINATING CORRUPTION. END SUMMARY.

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THE PRC MEETS THE BANJULIANS  
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13. THE ARMED FORCES PROVISIONAL RULING COUNCIL (PRC) CALLED A RALLY AT MCCARTHY SQUARE TO MEET THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF BANJUL SATURDAY AUGUST 13, 1994. ALL FIVE CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE PRC ATTENDED, AS WELL AS THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (CABINET) AND THE NEWLY-APPOINTED MAYOR OF BANJUL, MAJOR ANTOUMAN SAHO. THE RALLY WAS RESCHEDULED FROM THE RAINED-OUT EVENT CALLED FOR MONDAY AUGUST 8, 1994. GRIOTS (TRADITIONAL PRAISE-SINGERS) AND FOLKLORIC PERFORMING GROUPS WERE SPECIFICALLY INVITED TO THIS EVENT.

14. ALTHOUGH CALLED FOR 3 PM, MINISTERS WERE NOT SEATED UNTIL NEARLY 4:30 PM. A LIGHT RAIN FELL FOR MOST OF THE RALLY, BUT DID NOT APPEAR TO DIMINISH ATTENDANCE OR THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE CROWD. THE RALLY ENDED NEAR DUSK, AT APPROXIMATELY 6:45 PM.

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WE'RE HERE AND WE'RE IN CHARGE  
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15. LT JAMMEH AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PRC (LTS SABALLY, SINGHATEH, HAIDARA, AND TOURAY) ARRIVED ON FOOT FROM STATE HOUSE (ABOUT 100 YDS), BUT WERE PRECEDED BY TWO MOTORCYCLE ESCORTS AND TWO TRUCKLOADS OF BODYGUARDS ARMED WITH MACHINE GUNS AND RPG-7S. UPON ENTRY INTO MCCARTHY SQUARE, THE PRC MEMBERS JOINED HANDS WITH THEIR ARMS UPRAISED AND CIRCLED THE SQUARE, ACCEPTING CHEERS AND HANDSHAKES AS THEY PASSED. THEY WERE ACCOMPANIED BY NEARLY 40 GUARDS ARMED WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. SECURITY AT THE AUGUST 13 RALLY WAS MUCH HEAVIER THAN THE CANCELLED AUGUST 8 EVENT, WITH TWICE AS MANY SOLDIERS AND MUCH HEAVIER

WEAPONRY PRESENT.

¶ 16. UPON TAKING SEATS, THE DAIS WAS APPROACHED BY ALHAJI CONATEH, THE GAMBIA'S MOST PROMINENT GRIOT AND BALAFON PLAYER (AND A FREQUENT VISITOR AT STATE HOUSE BEFORE PRESIDENT JAWARA'S OVERTHROW). ON BEHALF OF ALL THE GRIOTS OF THE GAMBIA, ALHAJI CONATEH THANKED THE PRC FOR THEIR NEW GOVERNMENT AND NOTED THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST OCCASION AT WHICH ALL THE GAMBIA'S GRIOTS HAD BEEN ASSEMBLED TO GREET THE HEAD OF STATE. ALHAJI CONATEH SPOKE IN ENGLISH, WHICH HE FOLLOWED BY REMARKS IN WOLLOF. A HALF-DOZEN OTHER GRIOTS ALSO OFFERED SPEECHES IN WOLLOF ONLY, WHICH IN GENERAL ADVISED LT JAMMEH THAT A TRADITIONAL CHIEF MUST BE JUST AND IMPARTIAL, AND NOT SWAYED BY TIES OF FRIENDSHIP, TRIBE OR FAMILY.

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WE LIKE OLD-FASHIONED ENTERTAINMENT  
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¶ 17. THE GRIOT'S SPEECHES WERE FOLLOWED BY A MIXED GROUP OF KORA AND BALAFON PLAYERS AND SINGERS, WHO PLAYED FOR SEVERAL MINUTES. FOLKLORIC ENSEMBLES THEN PERFORMED IN SEQUENCE, BEGINNING WITH A JOLA TROUP WHO EXECUTED VERY ACROBATIC DANCES AND SLASHED AT THEMSELVES WITH SWORDS AND KNIVES, UNDERSCORING THEIR INVULNERABILITY TO SUCH WEAPONS. AFTER THE JOLA TROUP, FIVE OTHER FULA AND WOLLOF DANCERS PER FORMED.

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WE'VE GOT TO WORK HARD . . .  
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¶ 18. AFTER DANCES AND PERFORMANCES WERE FINISHED, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (CABINET) AND THE NEW MAYOR OF BANJUL WERE INTRODUCED. MAJ SAHO'S SPEECH POINTED OUT THAT JULY 22 WOULD BE REMEMBERED AS A DAY OF PROGRESS OF THE GAMBIA. HE STATED THAT HIS GOALS WERE TO MAKE BANJUL A QUOTE WORLD CLASS CITY UNQUOTE IN WHICH THE SECURITY OF BANJULIANS WOULD REMAIN HIS PRIMARY CONCERN. MINISTERS MADE SHORT SPEECHES FOCUSED ON QUOTE THE CHANGE (OF GOVERNMENT) UNQUOTE AND THE NEED FOR ALL GAMBIAKS TO WORK TOGETHER AND TO ABANDON THE BAD HABITS OF THE OLD REGIME. NEITHER INTERIOR MINISTER LT HAIDARA NOR FINANCE MINISTER DABO SPOKE ON THIS OCCASION.

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STICK TOGETHER . . .  
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¶ 19. LT JAMMEH RECEIVED A THUNDEROUS CHEER WHEN HE ROSE TO SPEAK. HE BEGAN BY ASKING THE CROWD IF THEY WANTED JAWARA BACK. THE CROWD ROARED BACK THAT IT DID NOT. HE ASKED THE QUESTION A SECOND TIME, WITH THE SAME ANSWER. LT JAMMEH THEN POINTED OUT THAT JAWARA HAD QUOTE LED BY DIVIDE AND RULE UNQUOTE, AND THAT EVERYONE HAD SEEN THE RESULTS OF DIVIDE AND RULE IN RWANDA AND SOUTH AFRICA. DIVIDE AND RULE HAD BEEN THE MECHANISM OF COLONIALISM IN AFRICA.

¶ 110. LT JAMMEH INSISTED THAT TRIBE HAD HELD SWAY OVER BROTHERHOOD (AMONG CO-NATIONALS) UNDER JAWARA, AND THAT EVERYONE COULD SEE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS POLICY IN RWANDA. LT JAMMEH PROMISED THAT THE PRC WOULD NOT ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN IN THE GAMBIA.

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AND REMEMBER WHO WE ARE  
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¶ 111. THE PRC CHAIRMAN THEN MOVED TO THE ISSUE OF DEMOCRACY. HE POINTED OUT THAT DEMOCRACY HAD ITS ROOTS IN GREECE AND ROME, AND HAD BEEN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF AFRICA'S COLONIAL MASTERS. HE REMINDED THE CROWD THAT GAMBIAKS HAD A DIFFERENT IDEA OF

DEMOCRACY, AND ASKED IF GAMBIAIS WANTED THE TYPE OF DEMOCRACY THAT PURCHASED WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION WHILE GAMBIAIS WERE POOR.

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WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THINGS . . .  
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¶12. LT JAMMEH PROMISED BANJULIANS THAT THE PRC WOULD ASSURE THAT JUSTICE IS DONE. HE ASSURED HIS AUDIENCE THAT WHEN THEIR WORK IS DONE THE GNA WOULD GO BACK TO BARRACKS.

¶13. MOVING TO THE QUESTION OF DETAINEES, ESPECIALLY FORMER POLICE AND ARMY OFFICERS (NOTABLY CPTS CHAM AND SARR, FORMER SPOKESMAN LT KONTEH, AND FORMER INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE PA SALLAH JAGNE, AS WELL AS AN ESTIMATED THIRTY OTHERS), LT JAMMEH WARNED THAT QUOTE THERE ARE ENEMIES OF THE GAMBIA INSIDE AND OUTSIDE UNQUOTE, AND THAT OUR (GAMBIAIS') DUTY WAS TO UNITE FOR THE GAMBIA.

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AS LONG AS YOU WANT  
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¶14. LT JAMMEH INTERJECTED THAT WE (THE PRC) ARE HERE (IN POWER) TO RECOVER QUOTE EVERY BUTUT (THE SMALLEST UNIT OF THE GAMBIAN CURRENCY) PLUNDERED FROM THE GAMBIAN PEOPLE UNQUOTE, AND THAT WE (THE PRC) ARE HERE TO MAKE SURE THAT THE INTERESTS OF GAMBIAIS ARE SERVED. HE THEN ASSURED THE CROWD THAT THE PRC WOULD REMAIN IN POWER AS LONG AS THE PEOPLE OF THE GAMBIA SO WISHED.

¶15. LT JAMMEH CLOSED HIS REMARKS BY PROMISING THAT THE PRC WAS FOR AFRICA AND AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT. HE REMINDED HIS LISTENERS THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY FORCES IN DETENTION WANTED LOOTING AND VIOLENCE, AND THAT THE PRC WOULD NEVER ALLOW SUCH A SITUATION IN THE GAMBIA. QUOTE NOW, NO ONE IS AT RISK OF LOSING EVEN A DOG OR A CHICKEN UNQUOTE.

¶16. LT JAMMEH'S FINAL COMMENT WAS THAT THE PRC WANTED A GAMBIA FREE OF PPP CORRUPTION. WITH A FINAL QUOTE LONG LIVE GAMBIAN UNITY, LONG LIVE AFRICAN UNITY UNQUOTE, PRC MEMBERS LEFT THE DAIS AND WALKED BACK TO STATE HOUSE, FOLLOWED BY LARGE NUMBERS OF CHEERING YOUTH.

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COMMENT  
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¶17. DESPITE ITS RAMBLING, OFF-THE-CUFF DELIVERY, LT JAMMEH'S ADDRESS WAS HIS FIRST MAJOR DEPARTURE FROM HIS OFT-DELIVERED EARLIER SET SPEECH ON THE NEED FOR THE GNA TO ACT OWING TO OFFICIAL CORRUPTION AND THE PERVERSION OF DEMOCRACY UNDER JAWARA. THIS RALLY WOULD HAVE BEEN THE APPROPRIATE OCCASION TO ANNOUNCE THE PRC'S PROGRAM FOR RETURNING DEMOCRACY TO THE GAMBIA, HAD THE PRC WISHED TO DO SO. THE ANTI-WESTERN AND ANTI-DEMOCRATIC TONE OF LT JAMMEH'S REMARKS, HIS FOCUS ON THE PRC'S MISSION TO FIND AND PUNISH CORRUPTION, AND HIS REFUSAL TO BEND ON THE ISSUE OF DETENTION OF FORMER ARMY AND POLICE (INCL. TACTICAL SUPPORT GROUP) PERSONNEL, ALL INDICATE THAT LT JAMMEH'S AND THE PRC'S THOUGHTS ARE NOT FOCUSED ON AN EARLY RETURN TO BARRACKS OR A QUICK RETURN TO REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IN THE GAMBIA.

¶18. THIS RALLY WAS NOTABLY DIRECTED TOWARD TRADITIONAL AND LOCAL LEGITIMIZATION OF AUTHORITY, IN CONTRAST TO AN EARLIER RALLY HELD A WEEK EARLIER AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM IN FAJARA. PART OF THE RALLY'S MESSAGE SEEMS TO BE THAT TRADITIONAL AFRICAN STANDARDS -- RATHER THAN INTERNATIONAL AND WESTERN ONES -- WILL BE THE TESTS BY WHICH THE PRC WILL

MEASURE THEMSELVES AND THEIR GOVERNMENT.

¶19. LT JAMMEH IS MERCURIAL, AND OFTEN SEEMS TO SPEAK WITHOUT REFLECTION. HIS PAST MISSTATEMENTS APPEAR THOUGHTLESS RATHER THAN DELIBERATELY FALSE, AS IN REGARD TO EARLIER PRC DISSIMULATION ON THE DETAINEE QUESTION. HE COULD EASILY CHANGE HIS MIND AND CALL ELECTIONS QUICKLY. NONETHELESS, THE POPULIST RHETORIC OF THIS RALLY AND HIS IMPLICIT ASSERTION THAT THE PRC CAN INTUIT THE WILL OF THE GAMBIAN PEOPLE WITHOUT MEDIATION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS DO NOT BODE WELL FOR THE GAMBIA'S POLITICAL EVOLUTION UNDER PRC TUTELAGE.

¶20. LT JAMMEH APPEARS TO BE DEVELOPING INTO AN EFFECTIVE DEMOGOGUE. ALTHOUGH STILL SOMEWHAT STIFF AND AWKWARD, AT THIS RALLY HE ORCHESTRATED THE CROWD'S RESPONSES VERY WELL. LT JAMMEH HAS ALREADY LEARNED TO MOBILIZE HIS PERSONAL POPULARITY AND PUBLIC ADMIRATION FOR HIS AUDACITY AND SENSE OF COMMAND INTO AN EASY JUSTIFICATION FOR CONTINUED POWER. END COMMENT. REGARDS.

WINTER